

ABC GOOD MORNING AMERICA

21 September 1984

LEBANON/U.S.
EMBASSY ATTACK

HARTMAN: Joining me right now, Adm. Stansfield Turner, who was director of the Central Intelligence Agency during the Carter administration, and he joins me here in New York. Good morning, Admiral. ADM. STANSFIELD TURNER: Good morning, David.

HARTMAN: A breakdown in security, do you think? TURNER: Yes. I think there were two lapses of security here, the one you mentioned, that there wasn't a physical barrier in front of that maze that a guard had to actually open, that a car was not able to get in and just weave its way through. Secondly, I do not understand, if the reports are correct, David, why we had pulled the United States Marines off those guard posts. We should not trust American lives in a terribly incendiary situation like that to foreign guards.

HARTMAN: Admiral, what, is it possible... I asked Mr. Armacost how possible is it to guarantee safety in that particular situation given the terrorist attacks, given our lack of ability to understand the people and what's going on. TURNER: Not very likely that you can fully protect people in this type of a situation. We could go and start from scratch on a bare piece of ground and build almost a fortress for an embassy, but even then they may lob artillery shells into it, they may come with helicopters or airplanes and suicide attacks. It just is a very difficult situation. I think that we have to think considerably about pulling out.

HARTMAN: Well, Mr. Armacost just said that we have so many vital interests there that it's not in the U.S. interest to pull out. TURNER: In the first place, I don't believe we have a vital interest in Lebanon. We can't let this push us out of the Middle East entirely, but Lebanon is not that vital because we've already pulled out all but 20 people, as he said, and we've got 80 people in there protecting the 20 or rebuilding old damage. That's a losing proposition, David.

HARTMAN: What about the Lebanese? How much of this responsibility...? You just said that we shouldn't leave our security for our people to Lebanese. On the other hand, to what extent do the Lebanese people have responsibility to protect the Americans? TURNER: They have the basic responsibility. They are the only ones who could really bring some kind of order here. You remember years ago we had the Bader Meinhoff terrorists in Germany. The Germans got those under control. Why?

Continued

Because German intelligence, German internal security, got after that problem. They found out by talking to their own people, which we can't do in any country as well as the local people, who these people were, and they either locked them up or sent them away. The same thing in Italy. They used to have a real problem with the Red Brigades. The Italian security cleaned that up. I think we're going to have to pull out of Beirut and say to the Lebanese, 'You restore a little order in your house. We'll help you. We'll give you all the intelligence support that we can. We'll give you technical support, but we can't be there and do it for you. You've got to restore order.'

HARTMAN: In the last 24 hours, the word retaliation has been thrown around by a lot of people frequently in a rather cavalier kind of manner, of 'Retaliate, retaliate.'

TURNER: Yes.

HARTMAN: How useful could that be? How possible is that to, quote, 'retaliate?' TURNER: I think it's a very long shot for a couple of reasons. One is, it's very difficult to identify precisely who these people are. Secondly, if you were able to identify them you'd be doing so probably by a very sensitive intelligence technique of some sort, and the CIA would be reluctant to expose that technique in order to explain to the American public why we picked out Joe and Bill and Pete as people to retaliate against.

HARTMAN: How does--good luck with this one--how does a free society deal with terrorists? TURNER: Well, we cannot stoop to terrorist-type activity in retaliation. We're not that kind of a people to indiscriminately go out and kill people who are just closely, geographically located in the area or whom we have some suspicion against. That's not our thing. We have to get the local people, either in our own country by going through lines at airports to be checked, that's one way, here, but in a country like Lebanon we've got to get them to do whatever analogous type of procedures are necessary to find out who these people are and get them under control.

HARTMAN: Adm. Turner, thank you. Welcome back. TURNER: Enjoyed it, David.

HARTMAN: Thank you.